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ABSTRACT

Little is known about how young people begin their occupational careers. Since many students are employed, the transition from student to worker is not necessarily a singular event. Consequently, the optimum time for studying the early career/job-search process is an unresolved question. Although job choice of career entrants is intertwined with the timing of career entrance, to date little research has been done in this area. Regarding the occupational choices made by young people, two divergent sources of job selection should be examined. First, the job selections of young people are limited to certain kinds of employment consonant with their personalities and/or occupational aspirations. Second, the occupational choices of young people are constrained by structural factors, such as information opportunities. The methods used by job seekers may indicate to what degree their occupational choices are consistent with their vocational goals. Past studies have shown that young people find jobs primarily through acquaintances and relatives, or by direct application to employers. Our understanding of the process by which young people find jobs has reached a point where refinements of earlier work as well as further investigations into unexplored areas are needed. Areas of needed research include longitudinal studies of job preference and more elaborate study of the job-search process. (Regarding the need for further research, this paper suggests a variety of variables and interaction effects that need to be examined along with the kind of data collection effort that such study will require.) (EM)

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THE CHOICE OF A JOB EARLY IN THE CAREER:

A REVIEW AND PROSPECTUS

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Abstract

This paper discusses four aspects of the early career process requiring future attention by researchers: how to differentiate pre-career employment experiences from the start of the occupational career; the proximate forces that affect the decisions to leave schooling and enter the labor force; the relative significance of prior aspirations and immediate opportunities in determining the course of the early career; and the details concerning the pattern of job-search and job-finding--the process by which young people become members of particular employers' work forces. With respect to the last aspect, the paper suggests a variety of variables and interaction effects that need to be examined and outlines the kind of data collection effort that such study will require.

INTRODUCTION

We know little about how young people opt for and obtain jobs early in their careers. To what extent are young people aware of different job possibilities? To what extent does this information about the job market affect the methods they use to find work: How do jobs found by different methods compare in quality and job satisfaction? How do chosen jobs compare with rejected jobs in terms of prior occupational goals and interests or in terms of extrinsic rewards, expected quality of working environments, and locational convenience? How do prior labor market experiences affect the job search process and the types of jobs selected?

These are several of many questions that need to be answered in order to understand the process by which a student becomes a stable member of a particular employer's regular full-time work force. Yet the social process by which different jobs and specific employers are allocated to young people has received little attention from researchers, even though the questions involved seem pertinent to major areas of social science research--the "status attainment" research tradition within sociology; the vocational psychologists' study of personality and vocational goals; and work by economists relating economic conditions to youth's labor force behavior. Rarely, in any of these areas, do we find the job attainment process itself a central focus.

This paper examines the existing literature to determine what is known about the process of job-finding among youth. We will also specify what important questions may be analyzed by existing but

untapped data and what issues will require new empirical data for their investigation.

The job-finding process itself can be considered to be the fourth in a series of issues concerning how young people begin their occupational careers. First we need to have a useful definition of the first job in a young person's career? (The "paper-route" clearly does not count; but what else should be excluded as pre-career entrance?)

Secondly, a central aspect of career entrance is its timing. Apart from the broad social class and school-performance determinants that lie behind widely varying expectations for duration of schooling, what are the more proximate forces that impel one of two similarly situated people into the labor force while the other continues in school? Are those proximate forces stronger at particular times; for example are they stronger during the midst of a school year or during the summer interregnum?

The third aspect of career entrance is the choice of an "occupation." Do aspirations and expectations of adolescents closely predict their occupations in their first post-schooling years (or later), or do structural opportunities that occur in the intervening years play a more significant role in the distribution of different occupations?

Finally, comes the job finding process itself. It is largely to the sociologist that the young person enters an "occupation." To most job-finders themselves, they have obtained a specific job with

a specific employer. In contrast to the tremendous literature on the structure of occupational allocations, the process of allocating specific jobs to individual applicants has only begun to be examined.

After more briefly touching on the three earlier questions related to career-entrance, we shall return in more detail to the job-finding process itself.

WHAT ARE "PRE-CAREER" WORK EXPERIENCES?

The transition from the status of student to the status of worker is not necessarily a discrete and singular event. At any one time, one-third of male high school students (age 16+) are undertaking part-time work concurrently with full-time schooling (Westcott, 1976). In one longitudinal study of high school boys, more than three-quarters were employed during at least one of three separate interviewing waves conducted during their 10th, 11th and 12th grades (Johnston and Backman, 1973: 52).

College students are also heavily involved in the labor force. A third of full-time students are at work including nearly a majority of those in community colleges. Four out of five men enrolled as part-time college students are also employed (U.S. Department of Labor, 1976: 38-39).

As a consequence of this rather extensive overlap between schooling and working, the optimum domain of time for the study of the job-search process in the early career is yet an unresolved question. To define a person's labor force entrance as the point at which the

person first looked for work after "completion of schooling,"--a strategy similar to the approach of Blau and Duncan in The American Occupational Structure (1967)--is to run the large risk of excluding from study prior job experiences that markedly affected later job search processes and career plans. Employment experiences prior to completion of schooling provide an unknown degree of career redirection and access to information and personal contacts that may affect later job search strategies and outcomes.

On the other hand, most teenage employment experiences are largely seen as temporary income-producing arrangements and may have little relation to anticipated careers or the actual directions that careers take. At least one national retrospectives study (Ornstein, 1976) found only small and not consistently positive effects on subsequent occupational attainment (income and prestige) of the number of full-time and the number of part-time employment experiences prior to actual labor force "entrance" (the first period of 17 months out-of-school).

While it would be clearly possible with existing data (e.g., the National Longitudinal Studies of N.C.E.S. and those of the Department of Labor) to measure the similarity between in-school employment and post-schooling employment (e.g., type of work, skills required, relative emphasis on people, data, and things), it would require new data to examine exactly how the teenage experiences lead to career positions: whether this is mainly through gaining job-specific skills, a re-specification of career goals, greater access to recruitment channels of employers in the same field, or by some other means.

THE TIMING OF CAREER ENTRANCE

The study of job choices of career entrants is inexorably intertwined with the study of the timing of career entrance. While for most people, the decisions may be independent--the decisions to leave school and to look for employment preceeding decisions concerning which jobs to seek and what specific job opening to select--this is certainly not always the case. For example, the particular job opportunities that happen to be available in one's information environment must certainly be decisive for some people's decisions about continuing or leaving school.

However, our knowledge of the determinants of the timing of career entrance is generally limited to a general understanding of the major long-term indirect determinants of educational attainment--such as general mental ability, parental socio-economic status, number of siblings, school grades, career plans, parental encouragement, and friends' educational plans. (Duncan, Featherman and Duncan, 1972; Hauser, 1973; Sewell and Hauser, 1976; Porter, 1976). While there is a close relationship between "age at career entrance" and "how far people go in school," the status attainment research tradition has not produced the kind of data most useful to the study of individual timing decisions.

One problem with the designs of these attainment studies is that the measurement of more proximate influences--such as information about job availability or friends' behavior and plans--is limited to arbitrary points in time rather than at the critical points at which

actual decisions to accept job-offers are made. For example, the influence of peer choices on attainment/career entrance decisions is often measured by asking, during a testing period, whether the respondent's best friend is planning to go to college. The behavior of friends may also be decisive at other times; for instance, whether, at the time the person decides to take a job, any of his several best friends have recently made the same decision. (Of course, it would also be necessary to sample other points in time to be sure people's best friends weren't making these decisions at other times just as often!)

Other proximate factors are often omitted from the model altogether: for example, how interested a student may be in accepting employment unrelated to career goals, merely as a short-term means for augmenting current resources or, regardless of his or her stated career goal, how well-defined his plans are for further education and how flexible they are to fortuitous employment opportunities. And a conditioned variable in all of this clearly affecting the importance of other factors, is the calendar period in which career entry occurs. The decision to withdraw from school in the middle of a term is quite different from the decision to withdraw at the end of the school year, which itself is quite different from the decision to stop schooling at the conclusion of high school, junior college, or college.

In summary, the notion of the timing of a person's first job must be predicted and understood in a context of decision-making reflecting proximate and short-term phenomena within the person's

social existence. To date there has been relatively little research effort along these lines--and little data available to pursue such questions.

THE "CHOICE" OF AN OCCUPATION

The allocation of jobs to people has been studied primarily in terms of the distribution of categories of jobs to categories of people. While "occupational prestige" and "income" have been the primary categories of sociologists, other cross-cutting dimensions of occupation have been used such as the complexity of the job's interactions with people, with data, or with "objects" (U.S. Department of Labor, 1965) or the extent to which a job involves self-direction as opposed to conformity to externally-imposed task requirements (Kohn, 1969).

Vocational psychologists have also developed typologies of occupations, such as Holland's six classes of job performance characteristics--realistic (manual), investigative, social, conventional (clerical), enterprising, and artistic (Holland, 1973). It is the psychologists who have been most active in trying to use occupational types to try to explain how people with different personalities and talents choose different career goals and why they eventually enter particular occupations. Holland's premises, for example, are that job satisfaction and job stability are enhanced when there is a close connection between major elements of a person's personality and the performance requirements of jobs; and furthermore, that persons with a given personality will tend to become employed and stay employed in

occupations calling for consonant skills, interests, and preferred modes of dealing with the world.

However, as appealing as such theory is, there has been relatively little empirical verification of the long-term relationships between career preferences or personality dispositions and eventual occupational activity. Researchers have only occasionally collected the kind of longitudinal data required to show such relationships over time. (For one such study, see McLaughlin and Tiedeman (1974); there are at least two other studies like this currently underway.) It would seem that enough existing longitudinal data sets exist for further work to be encouraged along these lines.

Yet it is also plausible that personality dispositions and career plans may have little to do with the job choices made by most young people embarking on their occupational careers.

For example, Roberts (1968), in a small study of young British workers concludes that the relationship between career goals and jobs is quite the reverse than is sometimes thought. "Ambitions," he suggests, "adjust to occupational changes, rather than changes being planned in order to realize previously developed ambitions." (p. 174).

He compared two cohorts of workers. The proportion of the younger cohort who had no expectations or plans to change their current occupation was much greater than the proportion of slightly older workers who actually experienced recent occupational changes. More changes occurred, then, than were anticipated. Ambitions, he says, are "anticipations of the direction that careers are going to take. They are

products of occupations that individuals are in the process of entering rather than determinants of the patterns that careers take." (p. 176).

These conclusions make sense from another perspective. Certainly the degree of occupational information which young people have is limited. The division of labor has produced a multiplicity of occupations. Before young people can develop any firm and stable career goals, they must become aware of the precise sorts of work (routines) that are involved and how one enters the occupation (requisites). Clearly, young people do not possess that kind of information about most occupations. The jobs that they begin to learn about are the ones which they become involved with in their own occupational and extra-curricular development. As their experiences accumulate, incremental decisions about job changes and job selection are made. Career plans made years earlier may or may not be largely irrelevant to these decisions.

Thus, the two possibilities remain: that job searches by young work-seekers and their selection of jobs early in their career are sharply limited to certain kinds of employment consonent with their "personalities" or with their "occupational aspirations" or both; or alternatively, that job search and job selection are constrained by more significant structural factors such as information opportunities, social networks, and prior work-related experiences. It would seem to be central to examine the relative importance of these two quite divergent sources of job selection; it seems surprising that so little work has been done on this question.

THE JOB-SEARCH PROCESS--DESCRIPTIVE DATA

The methods used by job-seekers to find jobs may also be indicative of the degree to which occupational aspirations are followed by employment consistent with vocational goals. It seems likely, for example, that the more that people looking for their first post-schooling job use various same-age friends and older relatives as their primary sources of information about job opportunities, the more likely that they will end up in jobs that have nothing to do with preconceived career plans.

That such non-career related personal contacts play a very large role in the job-finding process for young workers has been supported in most studies of job search. An early major investigation into employment structures, Reynolds' The Structure of Labor Markets (1951) found that among working class youth destined for blue-collar jobs, job-finding was primarily through relatives or acquaintances about jobs at their own place of employment or elsewhere, or through their own prior part-time employment experiences (Reynolds, 1941: 129). Thus, the process of job-finding was not so much one of choosing a job within a previously selected occupational field, but one of drifting into employment.

More recently, two major national surveys have included job-finding methods in their investigation of labor market activity. One of these, the January, 1973 special supplement to the Current Population Survey, used a mailed self-administered questionnaire to measure the job-seeking and job-finding methods of workers who started their

current job during 1972 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1974). Nearly 50% of these job-finders were under age 25. Of those in the 16-19 age-bracket, nearly two-thirds were either new entrants or re-entrants to the labor force at the time they began looking for their present job.

The utility of the nationally C.P.S. data, however, is limited by the fact that one-third of the sample, who claimed to have found their job without spending "any time looking for work before starting on [that] job" were not asked questions about the processes they used to obtain their job (except for specifying that the job was offered to them "without looking" or that they returned to a job once held previously, or one of several other possibilities).[1]

In any event, the C.P.S. survey found that informal methods, such as asking friends and relatives about jobs at their own place of work, were used and used successfully more often by younger workers than by older ones. Still, only 42% of the teenage boys and less than 20% of the women aged 20-24 used such methods successfully to find their current job. These are far lower proportions than found in other surveys of job-finding methods, and one suspects that the methodology of the C.P.S. survey--particularly the exclusion of one-third of all job finders--may be partly responsible.

With the younger group as with the older ones, the most commonly reported method of finding their job was "direct application to the employer without suggestions or referrals by anyone." On the other hand, younger people reported using fewer formal intermediaries, such as newspaper ads or employment agencies, to find jobs. Complete

tabulations of job-search and job-finding data by age are contained in U.S. Department of Labor (1975).

The other recent description and analysis of national data on job-finding methods of young workers is the work by Saunders (1975) with the "young men" sample of the National Longitudinal Studies of Labor Market Experience, the "Parnes" surveys. Saunders analyzed the job search methods leading to the current job at each of the first four interviews in the panel survey (1966-1969), beginning when the sample ranged in age from 14 to 24.

At each interview, more respondents reported finding their current job through the information or influence of friends and relatives than by any other method. With the passage of time, fewer youth used this method, but even on the fourth wave, 44% said they found their current job in this way while only 30% gave "direct application" as their answer.[2]

Differences also existed in job-finding methods by years of school completed. Among whites there was a large decline in the use of informal contacts with increasing educational attainment. The longer-schooled whites made more use of formal channels--school placement facilities mainly and private employment agencies to a lesser degree. Blacks showed a smaller decline in the use of friends and relatives, but also a decline in direct applications. Among blacks, higher education was related to much more frequent use of both school facilities and public employment services.

The N.L.S. data set contained information on measured intelligence, cultural exposure at age 14 (newspapers, magazines and library cards),

a brief test of knowledge of job requisites and routines, and a personality measurement of sense of destiny control (Rotter internal control scale, abbreviated). Formal techniques of job-finding were more frequent among youth with greater cultural exposure and among those with greater world-of-work information (even with education controlled). There were no differences for the I.Q. measure or for internal control. The associations were particularly strong among black youth where in 1966, for example, 5% of "low" world-of-work information blacks used formal job-finding methods but 34% of "high" information youths did so.

There were some differences in job-finding methods according to the occupational classification of the position obtained. The "other" category--representing both unclassified job-finding methods and the use of a chain of methods for obtaining a single job--was prevalent among those youth who found managerial and professional positions. In these groups the "friends and relatives" category was also less prevalent than elsewhere, suggesting perhaps that it may have been a combination of informal channels of job information plus direct application and use of formal intermediaries that led to job-finding for these higher level positions.

Newspaper ads were more common for jobs in the lower-skilled white-collar area. School placement services were particularly important for professional-technical jobs but also for jobs in the "service" classification. The use of friends and relatives to find jobs was particularly common among youth finding machine operative

and laboring positions, where a clear majority reported this method to be the way they obtained their job. The informal contact method was also important for salesworkers and other blue-collar jobs, blacks particularly finding the method useful for obtaining service jobs. Direct application showed relatively constant use across the occupational categories. These relationships stood up generally when controlling for years of school completed (Saunders, 1975; Tables 141-145).

Both the Current Population Survey of job-seeking methods and the Parnes N.L.S. surveys were content to describe the job-finding process merely in terms of the use or absence of use of each of a series discrete and presumably mutually-exclusive job search "methods." Only an occasional study has probed more deeply into the process of job-finding, and although none was large enough to include more than a handful of younger people, their methods are instructive for the directions that future research might go.

Only one of these derived from a large sample survey. This was the 1970 Detroit area study (Foote, 1973). In this interview, respondents were asked about the nature of the personal contacts involved in job-acquisition--whether the tie was through work, family, neighborhood, or other personal association; the frequency of interaction between the job-seeker and the contact at about the time the job-related information was passed; the subjective "closeness" of the relationship; the occupational prestige of the job contact's occupation; whether the job was located where the job-contact worked; and whether personal influence was used to get the worker hired.

The questions in the Detroit area survey are closely related to Mark Granovetter's perspective on job-finding (Granovetter, 1974). Granovetter challenges the notion that a rationalized society is moving towards allocation of employment by formal means. Furthermore, he claims that job-search through the interpersonal transmission of job-vacancy information is likely to yield better quality and more satisfying employment for the worker--especially if he or she is able to make use of a broad enough network of acquaintances with informational access to a wider range of job opportunities. In addition, Granovetter suggests that occupational contacts are generally superior to social ones, that a network of "weak ties" or non-overlapping personal ties is better than a tight-knit circle of mutual acquaintances, and that shorter information chains leading to jobs are superior to longer ones, since the degree of confidence of the employer is cut substantially when there are multiple intermediaries.

He predicts--and generally supports with his limited data--some additional associations; that people who are looking for work will generally find better jobs if they come upon their job information by happenstance rather than by direct inquiry; that people who find jobs by personal contacts are less likely to be dissatisfied (explained by the entree into the social and friendship circles of the workplace which personal contacts often bring); that newly created jobs are more likely than vacancies to be filled by personal recommendation (the person's availability is the cause of the position's existence); and that where a person is under more time-pressure to find employment,

job-search will be more likely made through personal friends, but where speed is not of the essence, the network of work-associates will be more likely to be employed in the job-search.

THE JOB-SEARCH PROCESS: NEEDED RESEARCH

Our understanding of the process by which young people find jobs has reached a point where both refinements of earlier work and elaborate extensions into unexplored areas appear to be necessary.

Although we now have comprehensive representative data on job-finding "methods," it is reasonable to question the reliability and meaning of the data. First, there is the question of the adequacy of the definition of the population that has been covered by the major job-finding studies. Most significant is the exclusion of the one-third of the respondents to the C.P.S. who claimed to have found their job without a period of job-search. It is not likely that the amorphous dividing line between making a haphazard effort to find work and having a job offered without actually "looking" was reliably adhered to by the C.P.S. respondents. Nor, would it seem, is this distinction a very useful one to make. All people "at risk" of finding new jobs--even those currently and stably employed--should be included in a study of job search. This would help us know the extent of consideration of job changing that goes on in a given cohort. Thus, future work should be more comprehensive in its coverage of the youth population.

Secondly, increased attention must be given to the design of questions regarding job-search methods. Question wording and format

are likely to affect the distribution of job-search methods responses. The C.P.S. study employed a check-list of twenty methods, without elaboration or probing on any "yes" answer. Asking for "instances" may eliminate some frivolous over-reporting of certain methods. The N.L.S. study's job-finding and job search questions were open-ended with coding categories marked on the form for the interviewer. Under-reporting is possible in this case, along with a reduction in the number of complex chains of "methods" used to find a single job. The coding methodology employed in this study also hampered discovery of the variety of complex (multiple method) routes by which jobs were obtained.

Future work is also needed to improve the categorization of methods that is typically used. Finding employment is a far more complex system of action than that described by a list of ten or twenty "methods" of job-seeking cross-classified by proportions of persons using each method.

A job seeker may make direct application to an employer, for example, for many reasons--because of product familiarity or company advertising, because of locational availability, because the applicant knew other people employed there or previously employed there, because of the imputed relationship between the firm's activities and the person's career plans, because of an impression that the firm often hires young workers, because of knowledge of the hours, working conditions, and job tasks performed, and because, although not specifically told to apply, the encouragement or offhand commentary by an acquaintance may have led to job-seeker to make the effort to apply.

In a similar way, the use of "friends and relatives" could involve little more than going to a work-site because of a friend's suggestion or it could mean that the friend was in a position to make the hiring offer. The friend may be someone no more knowledgeable about job opportunities than the applicant, he may be someone with a specific range of highly rich information (a well-placed employee of a company), or he may be a person much more widely knowledgeable about the labor market. He may be a close relative or a passing acquaintance or even a stranger only encountered because of a mutual acquaintance. He may even be a fellow job-seeker passing on helpful tips. It is clear that such categories as "direct application" and "friends and relatives" are both heterogeneous within and over-lapping at their common edge. Coding responses into such broad categories intended to be definitive but without probing for details would appear to be both unreliable and wasteful.

Depending on the recording method used (e.g., self-report check-list or open-ended interview item), the interpretation of a particular job-finding process may be subject to the weight that the respondent or coder puts on (1) the initial information acquisition, or (2) the actual application effort. This confusion is particularly great for those cases where the information source was a friend or relative, but where this does not directly lead to a job application and hiring decision (Schiller, 1975). More educated people, for example, may feel that they would have gotten their job anyway, by finding out about it through another source (thus responding "direct application"). Less

educated people, lacking that self-confidence, may regard the information source as the critical element. Obviously, in order to make such categorizations reliable, more detailed questions need to be asked in these surveys. In addition, ways must be found to preserve the detail obtained for more fruitful analysis of the job-search and job-finding process.

Apart from the "method" of job search, there are other areas that current research has hardly touched which should prove useful in understanding the job-search process. First, we have little knowledge about the intensity with which each method is used (even the C.P.S. study did not ask this). Even the number of specific jobs actually applied for, the number of people talked to, the number of want-ad sections examined, and so on are not known for any representative sample of job-seekers.

Secondly, we have almost no information about the breadth of the job-search across different occupations, different industries, and different conditions of work. How specialized are job searchers--particularly young ones? From the vocational psychologists' perspective, the job search should be relatively focused. Other analyses, as we have seen, have taken the opposite viewpoint.

However, research to date has not inquired about the activity by job-searchers that <u>did not</u> lead to employment. For what jobs were applications made or at least investigated? For what job opportunities was relevant information ignored? In what ways did these two groups of job possibilities differ--industry, size and degree of hierarchy of firm, location, occupation, wages, specific tasks to be performed,

hours, age-relationship of co-workers, and so on. Obviously, such detailed information may be time-consuming and even difficult to collect, but it would help answer the major question concerning the directedness of the job search process among young workers and specific subpopulations of them.

Another neglected area--although again one probably difficult to research--concerns the labor market information possessed by young job-seekers. Measures of general occupational information have been used in a number of studies of youth (U.S. Department of Labor, 1970; Johnston and Bachman, 1973), but these general information measures do not contain questions related to knowledge of available job opportunities in the job-searcher's immediate environment.

It would be useful to know, for example, whether young people looking for work knew the names of the major employers in their area and whether they knew the location of public employment services. Can they give estimates of the number of firms advertising in local papers under relevant occupational categories? Answers to these and other more situation-specific questions would give a clearer picture of the relevant labor-market information that young job-seekers have.

So far, the research questions that we have proposed are mostly static ones--intensity and breadth of job search and breadth of labor market information. A more satisfying portrait of the process by which young attach themselves to specific employers would require us to understand the dynamic properties of the search--how intensity and breadth of search vary over time.

For example, we do not know whether there are systematic changes in the way the people look for work as the duration of their unemployment increases. Most young job-seekers do not use formal channels of recruitment (want ads and agencies). Do they begin to do so after longer periods of unemployment? Is direct application tried first followed by asking personal contacts, or does the reverse pattern occur more often? What occasions a change in technique, if there is one--rejection of an application, a salient conversation with someone, or something else? Is there an increasing homogeneity in job-search methods over the duration of the search, or do people begin to try more methods of finding work?

Secondly, there are parallel questions about job situs--both in terms of industry and in terms of occupation. As the duration of unemployment increases, to what extent is there increased variety in the kinds of jobs sought? For example, assuming the career theorists' classifications work reasonably well for the consistency of jobs sought at the beginning of the search, how closely do they match actual applications as the search continues and how closely do they match the job actually found? Does the degree of association between occupational aspiration at the time of search and job actually obtained diminish with the duration of time required to obtain it?

Also, as the job-search continues, are there certain types of occupations--for example, storeclerk jobs, military service, and so on--that are more likely to be considered and chosen regardless of their association to prior career goals? It is plausible that as the

search continues, jobs that are more readily available become more widely considered, regardless of their association with the job-seeker's aspirations.

Finally, we might consider the effect of the job search itself on people's knowledge of job-finding. Does additional learning about job-finding take place? Is this learning related to speed of finding employment, intensity of search, or homogeneity of methods of search or type of jobs sought?

The kinds of questions that we have been discussing are certainly not easy to answer. Attention must be given to the means of collecting such detailed data, reliably, on a large enough population for conclusions to be generalizable.

One method that might be considered combines the limited duration of the retrospective study with the higher reliability of prospectively gathered data. This procedure involves a cross-sectional personal interview survey of the youth population combined with frequent periodic reinterviews by telephone with selected portions of the original sample.

The telephone interviews might occur on a monthly basis with even more frequent interviewing (weekly) for people actively looking for work. This procedure of telephone reinterviews and especially frequent reinterviews for people particularly of interest has been employed in other studies, notably consumer attitude studies (Schmeideskamp, 1962) and studies of pregnancy (Mooney, Pollack and Corsa, 1968). A diary procedure has also been recommended for obtaining detailed data over a brief period (National Center for Health Statistics, 1972; Sudman, 1974).

The reactive effects of such a prospective investigation would have to be considered. Perhaps this could be done by using a control group given only an initial interview and a follow-up a year later. Duration of periods of unemployment might be seen as the criterion of whether the constant reinterviewing had an effect on the job-seeking activity of those interviewed.

The sample size of such an investigation would certainly have to be large. One way to limit the sample size for reinterviews would be to assess the likelihood of each respondent's probability of being on the job market during the next year on the basis of his current labor market and educational status, his background characteristics, and his expressed educational and occupational goals. On the basis of this information, the follow-up sample could be stratified according to each person's predicted likelihood of being a job-seeker, those with greater likelihood being over sampled and those least likely to be job-seekers being undersampled.

CONCLUSIONS

The transition from adolescent student to adult member of the full-time labor force is a problem area that many research panels and conferences have suggested is in need of much research effort (Princeton University, 1968; Coleman, et al., 1974; National Commission for Manpower Policy, 1976). This is particularly true, it is thought, because young people in today's society are insulated from productive enterprise during adolescence, receiving most of their experiences of the world of work vicariously rather than personally (Coleman, 1972).

One primary question needed to be answered in this research effort is how young people actually make connections with employers and become members of the paid labor force. To date, our knowledge has been limited to three general areas: We know the general role of background factors, ability, performance, and--in a rather undifferentiated way--personal influence on the age (or, at least, the grade level) at which young people detach themselves from the role of student and (presumably) enter the labor force. We know that people can be categorized as having tendencies to aspire to certain types of occupations that, in a broad way, are related to their personality dispositions. (We know very little about whether they actually attain those occupations.) Finally, we know that young people, even somewhat more so than older workers, find jobs primarily through the assistance of acquaintances and relatives and by direct application to employers without assistance of formal agencies.

But much beyond that we cannot go. This paper suggests some of the routes that further investigation should take: longitudinal studies of preferences that include later actual job outcome characteristics to test the assumption that career aspirations help to explain the allocation of different jobs; and more elaborate study of the process of job-search, including special emphasis on patterns of job-seeking across occupational situses, heterogeneity of methods of job-search and the relationships among duration of unemployment and intensity and methods of search.

Further research in this area will no doubt be costly. The potential exists to reduce the vast inefficiencies and inequalities that are part of the labor market entry experience, but we do not even know many of the basic facts regarding how that experience is accomplished.

Notes

1. Unfortunately, there were no follow-up questions to prevent a disproportionate number of job-finders from wrongly selecting themselves out of the subsequent questions. Thus, the precise definition of the population completing the remainder of the questionnaire remains unclear.

2. Because Saunders reported his results separately for each year of the four years of data collection, relationships which appear in one administration often fail to appear in a subsequent year. The text contains some interpretations of the published results that were reasonably consistent across the different waves of interviewing.

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